

"Organic" Gaining Ground in Vermont



There's just not enough of Rock Bottom Farm's organic ice cream to go around. "It's going to be long time before supply exceeds demand," says Earl Ransom, owner of Rock bottom Farm along with his wife, Amy. "If we are a little low on quantity, that's a good thing. It all sells."

It's been only two and a half years since they built the creamery and began bottling their milk in glass bottles; the only processors in Vermont who use glass bottles. With only 28 cows and processing 1,000 weekly gallons of milk three and half days a week, the Ransom's organic milk products include 10 flavors of ice cream, whipping cream, half & half, skim, whole, 1 percent, 2 percent, un-homogenized and chocolate. Their customers who are left wanting more range from Vermonters who haven't had a positive farm experience since they left the farm; to the upscale urbanites who want the best of everything, to those who just like the idea of 'buying local'.

Pride in their products is a driving force for the Ransoms. Stroking the side of MaryLu, Rock bottom's cover cow whose image graces all the containers, Earl says "From the grass to the store shelf-we own it. From the cow to the store is less than four days. Sometime it's just 24 hours. It (product) has a good shelf life and we under date it. We can't sell milk that's 20 days out of the cow.

Judging from Ransom's experience, organic is not going away.

As consumer demand for organic products increases, NRCS is developing national guidance for natural resource conservation related to organic production. Since organic farmers are already building healthy soil and protecting the environment, good dialogue, and information exchange will be paramount.